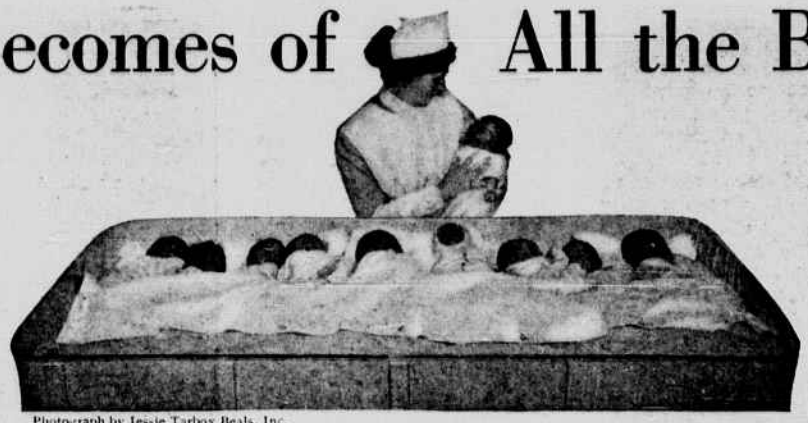
What Becomes of All the Babies?



Photograph by Jessie Tarbox Beals, Inc.

Baby, baby, who wants a baby? Here are nine in one crib, six white, two brown, and a pickaninny. In the various institutions of the country there are at least 100,000 babies waiting for some one to want them. You can have one, provided you're the right sort of person—unless you demand a "blue-eyed girl."

OUTSIDE of a great orphan asylum in one of the largest cities in the country there used to be an ugly wooden cradle. It stood unguarded and alone. To one side of it was a push button connected with an electric bell inside the orphanage; behind it a blank door set into the orphanage wall. At twilight every evening a strange, silent procession would creep along that unseeing wall—a woman, or two women; sometimes three or four. Each slinking figure would hesitate for a moment at the yawning cradle, drop a tiny parcel, press the button, and slip away. Smoothly, silently, the door behind the cradle would open; an arm clothed in a nurse's uniform would reach out and swing the cradle inside the door. One who listened closely might hear the echo of an infant's wail. Then the cradle would reappear, empty again.

The nurse, stationed behind the wall to tend the cradle, would yawn and return to her reading, waiting the next summons of the bell. Somewhere in the big rooms of the orphanage, another baby, freshly bathed and newly numbered, would be laid in a crib beside a hundred others. Somewhere beyond the wall, a mother wept for the thing she had done.

100,000 in Institutions

SOMETIMES those mothers came back to the orphanage, and, crying their remorse, pleaded that their babies be given back to them again. But the orphanage never gave back. Above the ugly wooden cradle might have been painted the warning, "Abandon hope." Once dropped into its waiting folds, the baby grew up unmothered and unloved.

That cradle has long since disappeared: it is harder to get rid of a baby than it used to be. But still thousands of babies every year are deserted—in railway stations, in the vestibules of public buildings, and in parks. There are to-day more than 100,000 babies in the various institutions of the United States. What becomes of them?

Formerly they were kept at the orphan asylum until they were fourteen years old and then turned out to root for themselves. Now, however, clearing-houses for babies have been established in most large cities—Children's Aid Societies, they are usually termed. It has been discovered that Providence evens things up in a marvelous way. For almost every mother who doesn't want her baby there is somewhere in the United States another mother whose babies have grown up and gone away, or who wants babies and has none. If it weren't for the fact that so many babyless mothers want the same kind of babies, homes could be found for nearly all of them. But alas for the boy babies! alas for the brown-eyed Susans and the black-eyed Bettys! The great, unceasing demand is this: "Send me a blue-eyed girl."

Our babies are all grown up and gone away. Somehow, I can't seem to get used to a perfectly orderly quiet house. My arms ache for a little one again. Can't you send me a blue-eyed girl? We'll see that she has every advantage that our own children had.

Here's another:

Five years we have been married, always hoping for a little one. Now we learn that there are to be no little ones for us. Our lives seem very empty. Send us a blue-eyed girl.

Sometimes the boys do get a chance:

I want a boy aged eight. We have about 300 chickens; we have lots of grape-vines and cherry trees and eight plum trees; we have a big garden. There are six of us already—all girls; but we want a boy. Send us an eight-year-old boy who will fit in between the second and third girl.

Nothing like having your family made to order. Many letters come from less desirable sources—from farmers who want to adopt boys because it's cheaper to have a son working around the place at no wages than to hire outside labor; and from women who must have some one to help with the dishes and can't afford a hired girl.

How Do They Turn Out?

ONCE in a blue moon the fairy tale comes true. Mr. and Mrs. Finley J. Shepard drop in at an orphanage, pick out a ragged little tow-head who doesn't know whether he ever had a mother and father or not, and make him the heir to millions and millions. That actually does happen in life sometimes, as well as in fiction—but not often. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand the life of the motherless little boy and girl is a pretty drab one before adoption, and afterward as well. One baby clearing-house in New York has shipped more than 60,000 boys and girls to find homes, sending out a special trainload every spring. And of the 60,000 none, so far as is known, has fallen heir to great wealth.

Do orphanage babies ever make good? In the fall of 1863, Johnny Carroll's mother left him in the waiting-room of the old Indiana House in Cincinnati, Ohio, and never came back. They had been on their way to see Johnny's father, a soldier wounded in one of the Southern battles, and not until years afterward did Johnny learn that his mother had died of sunstroke on her way to buy their tickets. Johnny was taken to the Cincinnati Home for Children. He had been in there about two years when that society decided that children would grow up better if parceled out among farmers. Johnny lived on farms near Martinsville, New Vienna, and Highland, Ohio. He grew up to be Colonel Carroll of St. Louis, chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee of Missouri, and attorney for the Hill railroads.

Senator Weeks of Massachusetts was an orphan; so was Herbert Bigelow, Cincinnati's famous preacher; and so were John G. Brady, for three terms Governor of Alaska, and Andrew H. Burke, first Governor of North Dakota.

Little David, in "The Awakening of Helena Ritchie," voices the pathetic appeal of the waif for a home:

"I seem to visit quite a lot," he says; "I'd like to *belong* to somebody."

It used to be thought that the orphan asylum was the best possible answer to the abandoned baby problem: many poor homes were broken up and the children ordered to be placed in orphan asylums. Few homes are broken up these days if there is any possibility whatever of holding them together. "Even a bad mother," social workers say, "is better for a baby than no mother at all."

What becomes of all the babies? Several hundred thousand of them have been parceled out into babyless homes in the past forty years. But there are still a hundred thousand or more waiting for some one to adopt them. Want a baby? You can have one—provided, of course, that you don't insist on a "blue-eyed girl."

The Richest Street-Car Conductor

By ROBERT H. MOULTON

THE richest street-car conductor in the world is a resident of Chicago. His name is Henry Toborg, and he is said to be a quarter-of-a-millionaire. No one left him money; he earned every cent of it himself, and he's making more to-day, while still working at the same old job. What is more, he *likes* that job and has no intention of giving it up.

It sounds almost unbelievable—that a man should want to punch transfers when he can clip coupons. But evidently Henry does. He has been ringing up fares for the Chicago Street Railway Company for thirty-eight years now, and he would be lost, he says, if they took his job away from him. That is why he is still found punching transfers for the Chicago public from 4 A. M. to 3 P. M. daily on a shuttle car at the end of the Blue Island line, when he might be riding in an automobile.

Do Everything Yourself

TOBORG has done away with worry about the high cost of living by the simple expedient of converting his salary of from $38 to $72 a month into real estate worth a handsome fortune. His income from rents alone nets him more than $5000 a year.

How did he do it? Well, for one thing, he has never ceased working. The man who stops work, he says, is like an old mill out of use—he falls to pieces. In the thirty-eight years he has been a conductor Toborg has taken exactly two "lay-offs," and both were due to strikes. Did Henry lounge around and smoke cigars while his car was tied up? Not much. Instead of loafing, he merely discarded his uniform for a pair of overalls and proceeded to repair the alley back of his hotel at Blue Island Avenue and Leavitt Street. It is quite a hotel, too, and so well conducted (without meaning to be facetious) that there is seldom a vacant room in the building.

One of Toborg's maxims is, never pay for work you can do yourself. He has followed this rule all his life, and it has played an important part in his success. Another is, make your vacations pile up your dividends. His bank account testifies to the wisdom of this policy.

"Punch, brothers, punch with care; punch in the presence of the passengaire," sang Mark Twain, and for thirty-eight years Henry Toborg has followed his advice. As a result he owns a hotel and other real estate worth a fortune. Other street-car conductors are said to have grown wealthy; but Henry did it out of his salary.

Conductor Toborg has been hustling for himself since he was fourteen, at which age he left his home in Indiana. When he was seventeen he had saved up $500. About this time his father died, and, as his mother was left without resources, he immediately turned over his savings to her, then started out to accumulate more. The next ten years he spent on the Gulf of Mexico, dividing his time between working on the sugar plantations and the steamship docks. When he came to Chicago at the end of the ten years he secured a job as street-car conductor. Then, with the money he had saved, he bought a piece of land on Blue Island Avenue and started the erection of a two-story flat building. Toborg took what he calls a "vacation"; that is, he carried the hod and laid the bricks himself, and also did some of the carpentry work. He sold the property at a good profit, clearing about $1500 on the transaction. This money, he says, started him on the road to a comfortable income.

Not Afraid of Ghosts

HIS next opportunity came in a peculiar way. A man in Toborg's neighborhood had started to build a house which, lacking finances, he was unable to complete. The building soon fell to pieces, and presently the report got around that the place was haunted by a ghost. For this reason no one wanted to buy the property, notwithstanding that the owner gradually reduced his price. At the psychological moment Toborg—who wasn't afraid of ghosts—stepped in and secured the land and partly finished building at a bargain. He completed it himself, and a few months later sold out at a net profit of $2000. With this money he bought a number of lots in the same neighborhood, and one by one erected houses on them.

At sixty-three Henry Toborg is a splendid example of clean living, perseverance, and thrift. He says he will never retire, for when a man stops work it is time for him to die.